



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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Meeting Date: December 10, 2020

Agenda Item: 2021 Deer Season Structure in HD 400, 401, 403, 406

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 minutes

Background: In February 2020, the commission adopted a biennial season structure for deer hunting throughout most of Montana. Due to differing public perceptions regarding the implementation of the department's proposal, the commission approved deer hunting season structure in HDs 400, 401, 403, and 406 for a single year and asked the department to bring back two proposals for the commission's consideration: the season structure as approved for 2020 and the season structure as approved for 2019.

The department proposes the following options:

- A. Three weeks with a general license season and two weeks with limited entry white-tailed deer and mule deer antlered buck permits in each of 400, 401, 403, and 406.
- B. Revert to a three-week general license season as approved for 2019 season.

Public Involvement Process and Results: Public comment will be accepted during the December commission meeting and through January 11, 2021, at 5 p.m.

Alternatives and Analysis: Proposals may be adopted as proposed, with adjustment, with additions, with deletions, or no change.

The proposal to continue the 2020 season for another year would allow the department to evaluate the season structure. The department will not receive harvest information for several weeks following the end of the hunting season to obtain statistically reliable data from harvest surveys. Additionally, the season structure was designed to increase harvest of male deer by 10 percent to address the apparent growing prevalence of chronic wasting disease in these hunting districts. The efficacy of this season structure cannot be evaluated without harvest survey data. To date, the department has received two negative comments regarding the season structure, although most landowners are still providing access during the current hunting season.

Proposed Motion:

I move the commission vote to adopt for public comment proposal [A or B] as presented by the department, with all other aspects of 2021 deer seasons unchanged except those influenced by routine calendar rotations.